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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF TEACHING QUALITY AND COURSE SATISFACTION AT TWO CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES OF INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Quality of teaching in higher education has been a debated issue globally including India since last three decades. To assess quality of teaching in central universities, a survey was conducted with 200 final year general undergraduate students who were randomly selected from two central universities (Delhi University and Jamia Millia Islamia University) located in Delhi. Course experience questionnaire CEQ of Ramsden (1991) was administered online through Google Forms to selected samples. And students' feedback was taken on their perception of teaching, assessment, course workload, clarity about goal of the course and the generic skills developed while learning. The results of the study revealed that students' perception of their learning experiences at the universities was significantly related to their satisfaction with the course. Academic environment was perceived positively by campus students on three scale out of five; that is: good teaching, clear goal and generic skills. While appropriate assessment was perceived negatively by university students. Only about one third of students perceived that assessment methods were appropriate in central universities. About half of sample students perceived heavy workload in the courses. The findings can be used to assess national professional standard of teaching (NPST) in the central universities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ultimate aim of higher education is to inculcate deep approach to study in students. Since approach to study in higher education is largely influenced by the type of teaching, curriculum design and assessment methods used in the institution (Wang *et al.*, 2013), it becomes necessary to evaluate how Indian undergraduates of campus institutions perceive their academic environment; as these are the crucial factors in determining quality of learning, academic achievement and satisfaction of students. Despite having massive increase in number of institutions and number of students' enrollment in higher education, quality of education is still a big issue. Although, Learning Outcome Based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) had been accepted by University Grants Commission of India in 2018 to improve quality of learning in higher education and government of India also looking forward for high quality higher education through National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) but "The designing of curricula, teaching learning and assessment are not as per the expectations of academic standards" (Sharma, 2020, pg.55). Welukar and Phadke (2020) found higher education system is lacking: quality faculty, subject experts, life-long learning and research skills; and proposed that "It is high time that universities work on redesigning existing curricula to reflect the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Pg.197). In most Indian higher education institutions, teaching methods are usually poor, teacher centric and seek the purpose of information

transfer to students and assessment methods are examination driven, memory based and norm referenced (JwelHoque, 2018). According to Gupta (2020) Indian education system has "chronic shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and low employability of students" (Pg.338). This scenario of higher education in India demands for the evaluation and assessment of quality of education in higher education institutions. Examining various factors in academic institutions of campus-based students related to their learning, can be helpful for educators/lecturers/course designers/course writers in terms of organizing courses, teaching, counseling and assessing students more appropriately.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Students' perception of academic environment is the indicator of teaching quality in higher education. Abundant of literature in western countries confirm students' perception of their discipline, teaching-learning environment and their teachers influence their approach to learning (Ramsden, 1979; Alf Lizzio, Keithia Wilson & Roland Simons, 2002; Kreber, 2003; Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981, Ullah *et al.*, 2011, Yin *et al.*, 2015; Yin *et al.*, 2018). Students having positive perceptions of their courses in terms of teaching, course objectives, workload and assessment were found adopting deep approach to study and were achieving high academic performance while negative

**Table 1. Statement of an item from each scale of inventory CEQ**

Scales	Statement of the item
1 Good teaching	Teachers of this course make a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having with my work.
2 Clear goal	Usually it is very difficult to find what is expected from me in this course.
3 Appropriate workload	There is a lot of pressure on me to do well in this degree course.
4 Appropriate assessment	Large majority of teachers ask me questions just about facts.
5 Generic skill	The course is improving my skill in written communication.

**Table 2. Reliability of each scale of inventory CEQ**

Scales	Chronbach alpha( $\alpha$ )
Good teaching	0.75
Clear goal	0.59
Appropriate workload	0.60
Appropriate assessment	0.41
Generic skill	0.78

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics for different scales of course experience questionnaire of undergraduate students (N=200)**

	GT	CG	AW	AA	GS	OSS
Mean	3.30	3.34	3.07	2.79	3.38	3.57
Std. Error	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.07
Coff.O Var.	0.24	0.17	0.21	0.27	0.21	0.29
Median	3.33	3.5	3	2.66	3.5	4
Mode	3.5	3.5	2.75	2.66	4	4
Std. Dev.	0.81	0.59	0.67	0.76	0.73	1.04
Sample Var.	0.66	0.35	0.45	0.58	0.54	1.09
Kurtosis	0.07	0.11	-0.02	-0.33	0.89	0.01
Skewness	-0.45	-0.48	-0.12	0.02	-0.91	-0.58
Range	4	3.25	3.75	3.66	3.83	4
Minimum	1	1.5	1.25	1	1	1
Maximum	5	4.75	5	4.66	4.83	5
Confidence le (95%)	0.11	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.14

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-neutral, A- agree, SA-strongly agree. \* indicate that item was reversely coded.

perceptions of these constructs led them to study superficially and poor academic performance (Webster *et al.*, 2009; Price *et al.*, 2011, Feeley and Biggerstaff, 2015). Since 1993 course experience questionnaire CEQ has been used in Australian universities annually to assess quality of different programs or courses and has been used as a performance indicator of teaching quality in undergraduate programs. One strong implication of the acknowledgement of students' perception of academic environment is that it should be possible to inculcate desired approach to study in students through appropriate course design, teaching methods and assessment methods. Students being direct stakeholders in education system; their perception of course design, curricula and teaching learning reflect quality of teaching. Besides, these perceptions about course objectives, course workload, instructional methods, types of assessment and feedback directly influence students' way of learning. Hence feedback obtained from students can be utilized in improving academic environment.

## METHODS

**Research Methodology:** Quantitative descriptive survey method has been used in the study. Data was analyzed by descriptive analysis. These surveys are common and has been done frequently by many western and non-western countries to assess students' perception of curricula, teaching and, assessment methods etc. (Yin *et al.*, 2018; Ullah *et al.*, 2013; Kaur *et al.*, 2020).

**Sample:** Samples for this study are 200 general undergraduate students who were randomly selected from a population of 500 students from two central universities (Delhi university and Jamiamillia Islamia).

**Instrument:** Course experience questionnaire of Ramsden (1991) was used to collect data. This is a five-point likert scale questionnaire measuring students' perception of the department teaching. Questionnaire consists of 23 questions in five scale, that is: good teaching, clear goal, appropriate workload, appropriate assessment and generic skill scale.

There are six, four, four, three and six questions respectively in each scale. There is one additional question of overall students' satisfaction with the course. Students' perception was measured on attitude scale in a 1-5 likert scale; that is 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example of an item from each scale is given above in Table 1.

**Reliability and validity of instrument:** Course experience questionnaire has been frequently used and validated in various western and non-western countries including China (Yin *et al.*, 2018, 2016), Japan (Fryer *et al.*, 2013) and Pakistan (Ullah *et al.* 2013). It has recently been used in India by Kaur *et al.* (2020) to assess course experience of post graduate students in a management course. To find the reliability of the questionnaire for the present study, a pilot study was conducted with 40 final year undergraduates from two universities and cronbach alpha was calculated. The reliability of different scales of the questionnaire is given in Table 2 above. Also, the strong association (cronbach alpha = 0.65) between students' perception of academic environment score and their satisfaction with the course shows reasonably high construction validity of the questionnaire.

## FINDINGS

Perception of academic environment of 200 undergraduate students had been assessed through course experience questionnaire (CEQ). Mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage of each item is given in Table 3. Descriptive analysis for all scales of the CEQ is given in Table 4. Further data was analyzed by frequency and percentage analysis for each scale of the inventory (Table 5). Students of these central universities were found having positive perception of their courses on 17 items out of 23 items. On six items students perceived courses negative. From six items three were from appropriate assessment scale, two were from appropriate workload scale and one was from generic skill scale. It is to be taken into consideration that students were found perceiving course negative on all three items of appropriate assessment scale. Campus students perceived assessment methods used in the universities were largely

Table 4. Mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage of each item of CEQ

Item statements CEQ	Mean & Std. dev (frequency and percentage)	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1.It is always easy to know the standard of workexpected from me in this degree course.	3.39 (0.86)	05 (2.5%)	25 (12.5%)	67 (33.5%)	93 (46.5%)	10 (5%)	200
2.The course is developing my problem-solving skills.	3.49 (1.05)	12 (6%)	22 (11%)	48 (24%)	91 (45.5%)	27 (13.5%)	200
3.The teachers of this course motivate me todo my best work.	3.55 (1.13)	15 (7.5%)	19 (9.5%)	47 (23.5%)	79 (39.5%)	40 (20%)	200
4*The workload in this course is tooheavy for me.	3.24 (0.92)	10 (5%)	30 (15%)	74 (37%)	79 (39.5%)	09 (4.5%)	200
5.The course is sharpening my analytical skills.	3.38 (1.07)	16 (8%)	23 (11.5%)	50 (25%)	90 (45%)	21 (10.5%)	200
6.I usually have a clear idea of where I am goingand what is expected of me in this degree course.	3.60 (0.98)	10 (5%)	15 (7.5%)	47 (23.5%)	100 (50%)	28 (14%)	200
7.The teachers of this course put a lot oftime into commenting and giving suggestionson my work.	3.05 (1.07)	16 (8%)	47 (23.5%)	61 (30.5%)	62 (31%)	14 (7%)	200
8*To do well in this degree course, all you really need is a good memory.	2.64 (1.06)	23 (11.5%)	83 (41.5%)	47 (23.5%)	37 (18.5%)	10 (5%)	200
9.The course helps me develop my abilityto work as a team member	3.38 (1.07)	37 (18.5%)	29 (14.5%)	56 (28%)	60 (30%)	18 (9%)	200
10.As a result of my course I feel confidentabout tackling unfamiliar problems.	2.96 (1.24)	08 (4%)	24 (12%)	61 (30.5%)	90 (45%)	17 (8.5%)	200
11.The course is improving my skills in written communication.	3.42 (0.94)	13 (6.5%)	30 (15%)	36 (18%)	95 (47.5%)	26 (13%)	200
12*The teachers seem to be more interested in testing what I have memorized than what I understood.	2.86 (1.11)	22 (11%)	62 (31%)	49 (24.5%)	56 (28%)	11 (5.5%)	200
13.Usually it is very difficult to find what isexpected of me in this degree course.	3.09 (0.91)	07 (3.5%)	47 (23.5%)	72 (36%)	68 (34%)	06 (3%)	200
14.I am generally given enough time by teachersto understand things, I have to learn.	3.40 (1.03)	12 (6%)	24 (12%)	58 (29%)	84 (42%)	22 (11%)	200
15.The teachers of this course make a real effortto understand difficulties, I may be having with my work.	3.30 (0.98)	11 (5.5%)	27 (13.5%)	68 (34%)	78 (39%)	16 (8%)	200
16.Teachers in this course normally give me helpful feedback on my progress.	3.23 (1.07)	09 (4.5%)	49 (24.5%)	50 (25%)	70 (35%)	22 (11%)	200
17.My lecturers are extremely goodat explaining things.	3.36 (1.10)	15 (7.5%)	25 (12.5%)	61 (30.5%)	70 (35%)	29 (14.5%)	200
18*Large majority of teachers ask me questionsjust about facts.	2.87 (1.00)	17 (8.5%)	54 (27%)	75 (37.5%)	45 (22.5%)	09 (4.5%)	200
19.Teachers of this course work hard to maketheir subjects interesting.	3.34 (1.06)	15 (7.5%)	23 (11.5%)	64 (32%)	75 (37.5%)	23 (11.5%)	200
20*There is lot of pressure on me to do wellin this degree course.	2.84 (1.05)	21 (10.5%)	57 (28.5%)	65 (32.5%)	47 (23.5%)	10 (5%)	200
21.My course helps me to develop the abilityto plan my own work.	3.45 (1.09)	09 (4.5%)	21 (10.5%)	39 (19.5%)	111 (55.5%)	20 (10%)	200
22*Due to the large amount of work to becompleted in this degree course, it is impossiblefor me to fully understand everything.	2.83 (1.00)	13 (6.5%)	72 (36%)	60 (30%)	46 (23%)	09 (4.5%)	200
23.The teaching staff make it clear right fromthe start what they expect from students.	3.34 (0.59)	08 (4%)	28 (14%)	69 (34.5%)	85 (42.5%)	10 (5%)	200
24. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this course.	3.57 (1.04)	10 (5%)	17 (8.5%)	59 (29.5%)	77 (38.5%)	37 (18.5%)	200

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-neutral, A- agree, SA-st rongly agree. \* indicate that item was reversely coded.

**Table 5. Frequency and percentage of student's score on different scale of CEQ (N=200)**

Scale/Course experience variables	GT	CG	AW	AA	GS	OSS
SD(1)	2(1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(2%)	1(0.5%)	10(5%)
D(2)	17(8.5%)	6(3%)	17(8.5%)	41(20.5%)	12(6%)	
N(3)	52(26%)	54(27%)	85(42.5%)	87(43.5%)	49(24.5%)	59(29.5%)
A(4)	100(50%)	126(63%)	91(45.5%)	62(31%)	111(55.5%)	77(38.5%)
SA(5)	29(14.5%)	14 (7%)	7(3.5%)	6(3%)	27(13.5%)	37(18.5%)
Total	200	200	200	200	200	200

**Note:** SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-neutral, A-agree, SA-strongly agree, GT-good teaching, CG-clear goal, AW-appropriate workload, AA- appropriate assessment, GS-generic skill, OSS-overall satisfaction scale

**Table 5. Results of Carl Pearson test for course experience and course satisfaction of students**

Students' satisfaction with course	T	Statistics	df	p value
Students' perception of their courses	0.65 *	12.02	198	2.39E-25

**Note:** \* indicate that relationship is significant at 0.01E-22 level.

factual based and term end examination also more focused on testing memorization rather than understanding of the matter. These (assessment methods) needs to be taken into cognizance by educators. Assessment which require critical thinking like group work, project work, take home assignment, report writing needs to be inculcated in course design. Descriptive results indicated that students' responses were obtained in a range of 1-5 score at all scales of the inventory. In the descriptive results nearly equal value of mean, median and mode and the value of kurtosis and skewness approaching to zero at all scales of the questionnaire represents that data is normally distributed. Though, a value exceeding +1 or - 1 of kurtosis and skewness show a non-normal distribution of data (Hair et al., 2017). A low value of standard error (sampling error) between 0.05-0.07 at all scales show that sample mean will nearly be same if any other group of samples are taken randomly. The low value of coefficient of variation between 0.17-0.29 at all scales represents low standard deviation or individual means of course experience variables were not dispersed from sample means at all scales of the questionnaire. Campus students were found having positive perception of their courses at all scales of the course experience questionnaire except appropriate assessment scale. Students were found perceiving appropriate assessment scale negatively. About 64.5% campus students perceived good teaching in the universities. Although, 26% of students were not sure about good teaching in the universities but very less (about 9.5%) students perceived teaching was not good in the universities. 70% of students in central universities perceived clear goal scale positively and only 3% campus students perceived that goals of doing course were not clear, though 27% students were neutral on this scale. Only 49% students were agreed that course workload was appropriate while 8.5% students were disagreed on this. Though, 42.5% students were neutral on appropriate workload score. Only 34% students were agreed that assessment was appropriate in the universities while a larger proportion (43.5%) of students were neutral. A good number of students (about 69%) agreed that their courses were helpful in developing generic skills in them while a few students (about 6.5%) did not agree on this scale. On overall satisfaction scale. 57% students admitted that they were satisfied with the course and about 13.5 students were found dissatisfied with the courses.

**Relationship between students' perception of academic quality and students' satisfaction with course**

Course experience and students' satisfaction of 200 students was assessed using CEQ with one additional statement of their overall satisfaction with the course. Carl Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to find relationship between course experience and course satisfaction of students. Results of Carl Pearson test are given in Table 5 below. The result shows that there was a strong positive correlation between students' perception of their academic environment and their satisfaction with the course. The value of p (2.39E-25) is far less than 0.001. This shows that relationship is very significant at 0.01E-22 level.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Students' perception of their courses is an important indicator of teaching quality (Ramsden, 2003). Assessment of students' course experience and satisfaction using CEQ has been frequently done by many countries across the world including Australia (Byrne and Flood, 2003), UK (Douglas et al. 2015), China (Yin et al., 2018) and India (Chakrabarty et al. 2016; Kaur et al. 2020) to improve course design and teaching learning in higher education. New education policy (2020) of India also suggested that "curriculum, pedagogy, continuous assessment, and student support are the cornerstones for quality learning" (NEP, 2020, p. 38). Thus, it is needed to be examined how undergraduate students themselves perceive their learning environment. Assessing students' satisfaction in the course is important as many studies conducted earlier found students' satisfaction with the course was closely associated with their retention and motivation of doing the course (Grace et al., 2012; Douglas & Branes, 2006). Universities and institutions worldwide are giving attention to students' satisfaction and it is obviously increasing their ranking (Sutherland et al., 2019). Teaching at Indian campus institutions is primarily done by lecture methods of teaching, followed by weekly tutorials, occasionally seminars and lab practicals for science students. Formative assessments are being done by class tests, assignments, projects and occasionally presentations. Summative assessments are semester-end exams of three hour. Undergraduate students of Delhi university and Jamia Millia Islamia university were largely found satisfied with their courses taught at university campuses. Only 27 students out of 200 were dissatisfied with the quality of courses taught in universities.

The students perceived a good teaching environment, clear goal and standards of the course and courses were helpful in developing generic skills in students like written communication skills, team work, collaborative learning and, planning their own work. The results of the present study are inconsistent with the study done by Kurup and Singh (2013) and Neelima (2020) where the authors remarked that most Indian universities are following traditional conservative pedagogy and curriculum and providing poor quality of teaching. The present findings are also found inconsistent with Sharma (2020) where the author commented that "Development of skills such as soft skills, Transversal skills, critical thinking skills and problem -solving skills have not been given due importance" in Indian universities (p.56). Since nearly 51% of students were either neutral or dissatisfied with the course workload in the university curriculum. This needs to be examined, as students in hard disciplines like science and applied sciences are seen to perceived heavy workload as compare to soft disciplines like arts/humanity and social science (Ullah et al., 2013, Richardson, 2006, Ramsden, 1991). The undergraduate students perceived assessment methods inappropriate in the central universities. More than 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of students were either neutral or disagreed with the appropriateness of assessment methods. Most students reported that teachers were mostly asking questions just about facts rather critical questions while teaching in the class.

The students perceived these assessment methods were mostly memory based and emphasize findings facts from the study materials. As new education policy (2020) also suggested that “HEIs should move to a criterion-based grading system that assesses student achievement based on the learning goals for each programme, making the system fairer and outcomes more comparable. HEIs shall also move away from high-stakes examinations towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation” (NEP, 2020, p. 38). The present study concludes by stating that suggestions of new education policy regarding assessments should be implemented and practiced in these central universities to make curriculum more relevant and interesting.

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